

COMPARATIVE YOUTH, WELFARE AND JUSTICE (2006-2007)

Experiences and thoughts of how to develop the European Union Erasmus Socrates
Common study Programme

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The experiences of the project were encouraging, although it was a pilot-project which dealt with a new and difficult topic. The programme outline, diaries of lecturers (Tarja and Kimmo) and the individual student feedback as well as the official documents ascertained that the students - and even mixed groups of students - deepened their knowledge of different systems and found new challenges, borderlines, “best practises” and ways of dealing with the reflexive social politics from defining the problem of social and youth politics and the policy itself.

Regardless of the social and cultural problems of young people, of the arms of public/third sector and the norms of justice which are guarding them, common experiences, problems and topics of discussion can still be found from the practises of youth justice, systems of punishments and practises of social politics/preventative work. At times the themes of the course and working processes proceeded ambiguously fast and intensively: for instance it was possible in the mixed groups to discuss practical work which has been managed to develop at the level of “common products” in the well-resourced European Union Equal Programmes in the past, such as Case Management- skills, mentoring and restorative/reflexive youth justice.

Nevertheless the basic qualification criteria for organising successful international EU-level meetings and educational seminars was to a certain extent missed: problems with timetable, students not receiving the final pre-programme well in advance and problems of preparing the material were partly “non-professional”. The multifaceted interactive process negotiation, discussion and preparation process managed and developed largely by Finns is technically and as a social practice correct and can be made work. However, in the future common pre-material and its controlled (exams) studying will be needed.

So in order to successfully enlarge the abstract pedagogical theme of dealing with social and juridical statuses of young people, social systems (and different systems of governing it – collective, public and market-based) and youth justice systems, ready-prepared pre-materials and clear coordination of teacher and student preparation and reception is required. In addition the education systems and their student competences accordingly varied; it is important to make sure that in addition to having a common language the students have similar interests and competences to creatively interpret and edit required information, for instance, particularly of youth justice or of the fields of dynamic social work and of its empowerment.

This preparation - and developing processes of three countries' educational establishments which support it - could deepen in three different levels: All of them in which there is also a question of linking the orientations of common civilizing and theorising knowledge on one hand and social political knowledge on the special field's practise on the other, (radical) contextualizing/tailored orientation and Case management.

1) After the cooperation at the level of seminars has developed to be a tradition, can each country in its basic teaching or in pedagogical negotiations and webpage archives take the background knowledge of the seminar into account as well as the of the common comparative material of sociology of young people and the development of welfare/ youth justice systems and the development of the concept of youth work. Once the work of finding and translating the basic texts has been done, it will serve the entire continuing of cooperation.

2) It is, however, possible and economically realistic to open the national social problems, rights of the young people and social political systems only to the extent of attaining the information necessary for understanding the youth justice/welfare and projects aimed at socially excluded young people. In this sense in addition to the material, preparation and the seminar process itself, there is a need for district informants (the ones who implement/do the jobs of the "mandarins of social work" and who often also have good networks in Europe). In the seminar programme these informants can present – was what the student feedback also wanted – the joy and pain of choices and interpretations of regulations in practical work – "*stories of success, best practises or everything went pear-shaped*". These informants can be found for instance from the corners of mediation, youth justice, prosecution, "learning by doing" pedagogies, mentoring schemes, intensive criminal/social work or EU-projects (e.g. EQUAL 2005-2007 <http://www.equal-newhorizons.org/index.php?menyy=1>)

Especially the last mentioned have experience in the conditions of developing common discussions in Europe, infrastructure, language, problem-based learning methods and – the ways of working and even the products (DVD, mentoring material, case-management- guides etc.). Intensive seminar could be based on, for instance, visits of above mentioned activists (e.g. mentoring, reflexive justice and case-management techniques), which would balance the student experience and the general philosophy of the area.

3) In the theories of post modern social politics or risk society there are many valuable and already English written texts, which discuss the borderline of culture and social (= social political). For instance there are discussions of cultural meanings for the base of multicultural youth work or order in the street. Similarly there are discussions of reflexive justice (also US), where community based, mediated, substituted and negotiated forms of justice with youth projects are coming into focus. Simultaneously universal European or national rights and problems and social political methods of working are being discussed for instance at the level of youth rights: why (radical) contextual, individually tailored and empowered, reflexive, particular, and partners (offender and the victim) significance and dialogical working methods within crime prevention, mediating or punishing work at present? At least better than the general equal opportunities- thinking or sharing the common justice

values or the direction towards collective actions? Or, is the fragmentation of justice norms actually the reason for disappearance of the authority in youth cultures, youth socialization and “everything goes”?

If and when mixed groups and social programme of the course will be linked with the kinds of common and special processes of knowledge and the problems the informants prepare bring along as well as the group exercises... the content will blow off – everyone learns reflective thinking and the world with its plural values will shrink and start growing again.

Sources:

(the ones with the bold particularly good, easily accessible):

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